# THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CALL

The pillars or foundations of *da'wah* consist of three elements: The Call, The Caller and The Called. Each has its own particular characteristics, prerequisites and goals. For the effective fulfillment of the responsibility of *da'wah* the requirements of each pillar must be thoroughly met.

The Aim or Goal of *Da'wah* is to spread the teachings of Islaam in their pristine purity. It is to enlighten disbelievers about Islaam and to correct mistaken beliefs among Muslims. The Prophet ( ° ) said:

(( إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ بَدَأَ غَرِيبًا وَسَيَعُودُ غَرِيبًا، فَطُوبَى لِلْغُرَبَاءِ )).

"*Islaam began as something strange, and it will return as something strange, so give glad tidings to the strangers.*"[1]

قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ! وَمَا الْغُرَبَاءُ؟ قَالَ:

When the companions asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, who are the strangers?" He replied,

(( الَّذِينَ يُصْلِحُونَ عِنْدَ فَسَادِ النَّاسِ )).

"*Those who rectify [themselves and others] when people become corrupt*."[2]
The goal of *da'wah* is expressed in the following verse and others like it.

اُدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ

**"Call to the way of your Lord ..."***Soorah an-Nahl,* (16): 125

Abul-Hasan 'Alee Nadawee said the following regarding this verse: "The verse does not ask [the Prophet ( ° )] to invite people to faith, correct beliefs, prayers, good manners or call on people to respect human rights. No such things have been mentioned in particular since all these are covered in the phrase **"… to the way of your Lord."** … These words are profound and comprehensive."[3]
Sh. Ibn Baaz elaborated on the verse saying,

> "The way of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is submission, the straight path, the religion of Allaah with which He sent His Messenger ( ° ). Therefore, this is what must be called to, not the *math'hab* of such and such a person nor the opinion of any individual. …The way of Allaah is that which the Noble Qur'aan and the pure authentic *Sunnah* of the Messenger ( ° ) directs one to… It is necessary for the Muslim missionary to call people to the whole of Islaam and not to cause division among them, nor to be a blind follower of a *math'hab*, a tribe, a shaykh or a leader, etc. Rather his aim should be

[1] *Sahih Muslim,* vol. , p. , no. .
[2] *Sunan at-Tirmithee*, 2765 (*Those who correct what people have corrupted of my Sunnah.*) Reported by at-Tabaraanee in *al-Jaami' as-Sagheer,* no. 290.
[3] *Inviting to the Way of Allah,* p. 11.

to affirm and clarify the truth and establish people upon that truth, even if it contradicts the opinion of so and so or such and such a person."[4]

The call to Islaam, meaning the Qur'aan and Sunnah, should be in accordance with the understanding of the early righteous generations of Muslims (i.e., the *salaf*). As there is only one "way of Allaah", i.e., "religion of Allaah": Islaam, there is only one way to follow that religion. The Prophet ( ° ) did not leave behind him a multitude of different ways to follow Islaam. Division and differences are not blessings, as some would claim based on fabricated narrations attributed to the Prophet ( ° ). Allaah, Most Great and Glorious condemned factionalism saying:

وَلاَ تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

**"Do not be of the pagans; of those who split up their religion and became sects, each sect rejoicing in what it has."** (*Soorah ar-Room*, 30: 31-2)

And He alluded to the necessity of following the understanding of the Companions of the Prophet ( ° ) in the following verse:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَاتَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَى وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُوَلِّهِ مَاتَوَلَّى وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَآءتْ مَصِيرًا

**"Whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has been made clear to him <u>and follows a way other than that of the believers</u>, I will leave him to his choice and place him in hell. And worst indeed is that destination."** (*Soorah an-Nisaa*, 4: 115)

Allaah stated this despite the fact that opposing the Messenger ( ° ) alone guarantees punishment. At the time when the verse was revealed "the believers" was none other than the Companions of the Prophet ( ° ).

Ibn Mas'ood said, "Allaah's Messenger ( ° ) drew a line for us [in the dirt] and said, '*This is the path of Allaah.*' Then he drew other lines branching off to the right and to the left and said, '*These are the paths at the end of which is a devil calling people to it.*' Then he recited:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلاَ تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ

**"This is my straight path, so follow it and do not follow the [other] paths, for they will separate you from His path."** (*Soorah al-An'aam*, 6: 153)"[5]

This *<u>h</u>adeeth* proves that the way is only one. Ibn al-Qayyim commented on this as follows: "This is because the path leading to Allaah is only one, and it is what He sent His Messengers on and sent His Books with. No one reaches Him except along this path. Even if people take every path and try to open every door, these paths will be blocked

[4] *Words of Advice Regarding Da'wah*, pp. 33-35.

[5] Collected by A<u>h</u>mad, an-Nasaa'ee and ad-Daarimee, and authenticated by A<u>h</u>mad Shaakir in *al-Musnad*, vol.6, pp.89-90, no.4142.

and the doors will be locked, with the exception of this One Path. For it is connected to Allaah and leads to Him."[6]

'Abdullaah ibn Lu'ayy narrated that Mu'aawiyah ibn Abee Sufyaan got up among them and said, "Indeed the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) stood up among us and said, '*Certainly those before you from the People of the Book split up into seventy two sects and [the followers of] this religion will split up into seventy-three sects, seventy-two of them in the Fire and one in Paradise; that is the group* [jamaa'ah].' "[7] In another narration, when he was asked what the one sect was, he replied, "*What my companions and I are following now.*"[8]

Some aspects of Islaam are more critical than others; therefore priority must be given to the most important principles. The first pillar of Islaam is the declaration that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and the first pillar of Eemaan (faith) is belief in Allaah. Furthermore, the only unforgivable sin is to worship other than Allaah. Consequently, the call to Allaah should focus on *Tawheed*, which is exactly what the Prophet (ﷺ) instructed his companions whenever he sent them. For example, Ibn 'Abbaas reported that when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Mu'aath ibn Jabal to Yemen he told him:

(( إِنَّكَ تَقْدَمُ عَلَى قَوْمٍ أَهْلِ كِتَابٍ فَلْيَكُنْ أَوَّلَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَي أَنْ يُوَحِّدُوا اللَّه تَعَالَى فَإِذَا عَرَفُوا ذَلِكَ فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ فَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ خَمْسَ صَلَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمِهِمْ وَلَيْلَتِهِمْ فَإِذَا صَلَّوْا فَأَخْبِرْهُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْهِمْ زَكَاةَ أَمْوَالِهِمْ تُؤْخَذُ مِنْ غَنِيِّهِمْ فَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فَقِيرِهِمْ فَإِذَا أَقَرُّوا بِذَلِكَ فَخُذْ مِنْهُمْ وَتَوَقَّ كَرَائِمَ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ)).

"*You will be going to Christians and Jews, so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allaah, Most High. If they realize that, then inform them that Allaah has made five daily prayers obligatory on them. If they pray them, then inform them that Allaah has made the payment of charity from their wealth obligatory on their rich to be given to their poor. If they accept that, then take it from them and avoid the best part of people's property.*" [9]

The call to *Tawheed* should address Allaah's unique unity with respect to His lordship and sovereignty over His creation, His names and attributes and His right to be worshipped alone, without any partner. This belief in *Tawheed* should also be manifest in human relations with God, in their social interactions among themselves and in their relationship with the world in which they live and the creatures of that world that have been subjected to them.

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[6] *At-Tafseer al-Qayyim*, pp. 14-5.
[7] *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. , p. , no. .
[8] *Mustadrak al-Haakim*,
[9] *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 9, pp. 348-9, no. 469 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol.1, pp. 15, no. 28.

Thus, whatever subject the *da'wah* may begin on, whether *hijaab*, terrorism, polygamy, etc., a conscious effort should be made to divert the topic ultimately to that of *Tawheed*. For it is only the acceptance of *Tawheed* which will provide the one being called with success in this life and the next. If he is convinced of the reasonableness of *hijaab*, and the unfairness of labeling Muslims as terrorists, and that polygamy is logical and natural, but he has not accepted the unique oneness of Allaah and that He alone deserves our worship, and dies in that state, he has failed and destroyed his opportunity for success in the next life. Whereas, if he accepted Allaah's unique oneness and worshipped Him alone, but was confused about the obligation of *hijaab*, terrorism and polygamy, and died in that state, his place in paradise would be guaranteed according to Allaah's promise and that of His Messenger.

A classical example of diversion in *da'wah* can be seen in the case of Prophet Yousuf in prison when two prisoners asked him to interpret their dreams.

**Then it occurred to them, after they had seen the proofs to imprison him for a time. And there entered with him two young men in the prison. One of them said: "Indeed, I saw myself pressing wine." The other said: "Indeed, I saw myself carrying bread on my head and birds were eating from it." [They asked:] "Inform us of the interpretation of these things. Indeed, we believe you are one of the righteous." He replied: "Whenever food came to you as your provision, I informed you about it before it came. That is from what my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have abandoned the religion of a people who did not believe in Allaah and the Hereafter. And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and we would never attribute any partners whatsoever to Allaah. This is from the Grace of Allaah to us and to humankind, but most people are not thankful.**

**O my two prison companions! Are many different lords better than Allaah, the One, the Irresistible? You are only worshiping besides Him names which you and your fathers made up for which no authority was revealed by Allaah. Judgment belongs to Allaah alone. He has commanded that you worship none besides Him; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.**

**O my two prison companions! As for one of you, he will pour wine for his lord to drink and as for the other, he will be crucified and birds will eat form his head. This is the case judged concerning which you both inquire."** (*Soorah Yousuf*, 12: 35-41)

It is also important to remember that the call is to the message of Islaam and not necessarily conversion to Islaam. It is an invitation in which the message of Islaam should be conveyed in its pristine purity and its comprehensive beauty. If that is the case, then people's negative reactions are not important, as long as they are not a result of faults on our part. Furthermore, the message should not be compromised in such a way as to water it down until its essence is lost. The essence of the message, *Tawheed*, must be conveyed wherever and whenever possible and as directly as possible.

The popular phenomenon of "Interfaith dialogue" attempts to blur the essential issues and put all religions on an equal footing. Since all religions call to goodness and righteousness, they should be tolerant and accepting of each other. Meaning, there is no need to try to convert each other's followers. Peaceful co-existence is what is needed and

not a battle for souls. Such a call is dangerous as it is fundamentally false. There is only one true religion, Islaam, and all others are false. Other religions, in an attempt to slow or halt the wave of conversions from their religions to Islaam, have introduced the interfaith dialogue concept after centuries of vilifying and demonizing it final Prophet, Muhammad ( ° ).

As for dialogues and forums where knowledgeable Muslims have an opportunity present their evidences for the superiority of Islaam and its teachings to masses of non-Muslims, these are acceptable as long as the clear message of Islaam is not compromised.